

News Release

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Unemployment Rate Climbs in December

Alaska's unemployment rate rose seven-tenths of a percentage point in December to 8.0 percent. Although unemployment typically rises in December, the 2003 increase was slightly larger than in recent years. The comparable national rate (not seasonally adjusted) fell two-tenths of a percentage point to 5.4 percent. Dan Robinson, an economist with the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, reported the numbers.

The number of unemployed Alaskans rose from 25,093 to 27,462 in December. The increase was marginally higher than 2002's November-to-December increase.

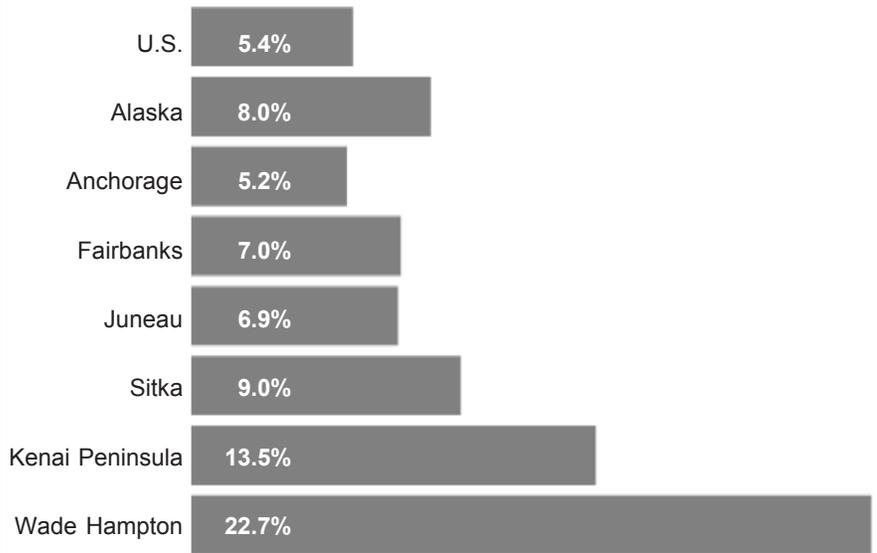
All of the state's six economic regions saw higher December unemployment rates, with the most noticeable jumps coming in the Gulf Coast and Southeast regions. Within the Gulf Coast region, both the Kenai Peninsula and Kodiak Island Boroughs recorded large December increases in unemployment.

In several Southeast communities, claims for unemployment benefits, one of the inputs used to calculate the unemployment rate, increased dramatically. For example, the Wrangell-Petersburg area saw claims rise from 172 in November to 264 in December. Claims in Sitka jumped from 164 to 225, and in the Prince of Wales-Outer Ketchikan area the number increased from 174 to 238.

Anchorage enjoyed the state's lowest unemployment rate in December by a wide margin. At 5.2 percent, Anchorage's rate is at least 1.7 percentage points lower than any other area in the state. The unemployment rate in Fairbanks rose by six-tenths of a percentage point to 7.0 percent, while Juneau's rate climbed five-tenths to 6.9 percent.

Wage and salary employment estimates for December showed a decline of 2,400 jobs. Seasonal job losses in the construction and seafood processing industries accounted for nearly all of the reductions. The health care industry continues to be a bright spot, adding about 500 jobs in December and 2,400 over the last twelve months. Across all industries, the state has added an estimated 5,100 jobs to the economy since December 2002.

December Unemployment for Selected Areas



(Detailed table on reverse)

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section
All rates not seasonally adjusted

Alaska Nonfarm Wage and Salary Employment

	preliminary 12/03	revised 11/03	revised 12/02	Changes from	
				11/03	12/02
Total Nonfarm Employment	292,500	294,900	287,400	-2,400	5,100
Natural Resources & Mining	9,600	9,800	9,900	-200	-300
Construction	14,400	15,800	14,100	-1,400	300
Manufacturing	6,400	7,400	6,300	-1,000	100
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	60,500	60,700	59,700	-200	800
Information	7,200	7,200	7,200	0	0
Financial Activities	14,100	13,900	13,500	200	600
Professional & Business Services	23,700	23,600	22,700	100	1,000
Education & Health Services	33,200	32,700	30,800	500	2,400
Leisure & Hospitality	27,200	27,300	27,200	-100	0
Other Services	12,800	12,800	12,400	0	400
Government	83,600	83,500	83,600	100	0

Government includes employees of public schools, University of Alaska, and certain federally-recognized tribal entities.
Benchmark date: March 2002

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section

Seasonally Adjusted Unemployment Rate

December 2003:	Alaska 7.7%	U.S. 5.7%
November 2003:	Alaska 7.5%	U.S. 5.9%
December 2002:	Alaska 8.4%	U.S. 6.0%

URL Address: <http://almis.labor.state.ak.us>

Contact: Dan Robinson (907) 465-6036

Labor Force By Region and Census Area

	Labor Force			Unemployment			Rate			Employment		
	12/03	11/03	12/02	12/03	11/03	12/02	12/03	11/03	12/02	12/03	11/03	12/02
Alaska Statewide	341,868	341,737	322,147	27,462	25,093	27,660	8.0	7.3	8.6	314,406	316,644	294,487
Anchorage/Mat-Su Region	198,419	197,218	184,251	11,802	10,945	12,147	5.9	5.5	6.6	186,617	186,273	172,104
Municipality of Anchorage	159,948	159,237	149,932	8,397	7,977	8,692	5.2	5.0	5.8	151,551	151,260	141,240
Mat-Su Borough	38,471	37,981	34,319	3,405	2,968	3,455	8.9	7.8	10.1	35,066	35,013	30,864
Gulf Coast Region	32,157	32,345	31,403	4,528	4,050	4,669	14.1	12.5	14.9	27,629	28,295	26,734
Kenai Peninsula Borough	20,853	20,935	20,446	2,824	2,472	3,001	13.5	11.8	14.7	18,029	18,463	17,445
Kodiak Island Borough	6,598	6,647	6,248	1,114	1,031	942	16.9	15.5	15.1	5,484	5,616	5,306
Valdez-Cordova CA	4,706	4,762	4,710	590	547	727	12.5	11.5	15.4	4,116	4,215	3,983
Interior Region	50,519	50,812	48,653	4,079	3,704	4,289	8.1	7.3	8.8	46,440	47,108	44,364
Denali Borough	1,292	1,298	1,223	210	201	189	16.3	15.5	15.5	1,082	1,097	1,034
Fairbanks North Star Bor.	44,280	44,598	42,589	3,112	2,838	3,261	7.0	6.4	7.7	41,168	41,760	39,328
Southeast Fairbanks CA	2,651	2,625	2,608	368	309	427	13.9	11.8	16.4	2,283	2,316	2,181
Yukon-Koyukuk CA	2,296	2,290	2,232	389	356	411	16.9	15.5	18.4	1,907	1,934	1,821
Northern Region	9,236	9,108	8,956	1,373	1,322	1,242	14.9	14.5	13.9	7,863	7,786	7,714
Nome Census Area	3,417	3,362	3,327	493	467	458	14.4	13.9	13.8	2,924	2,895	2,869
North Slope Borough	3,450	3,436	3,278	473	489	358	13.7	14.2	10.9	2,977	2,947	2,920
Northwest Arctic Borough	2,368	2,310	2,352	406	367	427	17.1	15.9	18.2	1,962	1,943	1,925
Southeast Region	37,442	37,615	35,545	3,570	3,060	3,330	9.5	8.1	9.4	33,872	34,555	32,215
Haines Borough	1,224	1,226	1,188	177	158	192	14.5	12.9	16.2	1,047	1,068	996
Juneau Borough	16,374	16,618	15,497	1,129	1,066	998	6.9	6.4	6.4	15,245	15,552	14,499
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	7,021	7,103	6,766	644	597	701	9.2	8.4	10.4	6,377	6,506	6,065
Pr. of Wales-Outer Ketchikan	2,656	2,611	2,505	403	312	362	15.2	11.9	14.5	2,253	2,299	2,143
Sitka Borough	4,425	4,419	4,157	397	310	326	9.0	7.0	7.8	4,028	4,109	3,831
Skagway-Hoonah-Angoon CA	2,077	2,057	1,932	320	264	261	15.4	12.8	13.5	1,757	1,793	1,671
Wrangell-Petersburg CA	3,350	3,274	3,205	448	314	445	13.4	9.6	13.9	2,902	2,960	2,760
Yakutat Borough	314	306	295	51	38	45	16.2	12.4	15.3	263	268	250
Southwest Region	14,095	14,639	13,339	2,110	2,011	1,982	15.0	13.7	14.9	11,985	12,628	11,357
Aleutians East Borough	1,548	1,586	1,454	117	78	98	7.6	4.9	6.7	1,431	1,508	1,356
Aleutians West Census Area	2,376	2,465	2,267	288	265	288	12.1	10.8	12.7	2,088	2,200	1,979
Bethel Census Area	5,522	5,751	5,182	876	855	779	15.9	14.9	15.0	4,646	4,896	4,403
Bristol Bay Borough	477	494	445	66	61	56	13.8	12.3	12.6	411	433	389
Dillingham Census Area	1,661	1,746	1,608	210	217	233	12.6	12.4	14.5	1,451	1,529	1,375
Lake & Peninsula Borough	539	540	491	107	84	81	19.9	15.6	16.5	432	456	410
Wade Hampton CA	1,972	2,057	1,891	447	450	446	22.7	21.9	23.6	1,525	1,607	1,445

Benchmark: 2002 Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis

Comparisons between different time periods are not as meaningful as other time series produced by Research & Analysis. • The official definition of unemployment excludes anyone who has not made an active attempt to find work in the four-week period up to and including the week that includes the 12th of the reference month. Due to the scarcity of employment opportunities in rural Alaska, many individuals do not meet the official definition of unemployed because they have not conducted an active job search. They are considered not in the labor force.